

AMENDMENT A
(37 C.F.R. 1.111)

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification in accordance with 37 C.F.R. 1.121 as follows to correct minor informalities:

On page 1, after line 4 of the specification, add a title to the section that follows and amend the paragraph starting at line 5 and ending at line 18.

In the paragraph starting on page 1, line 19 and ending on page 2, line 13 and add a title to the immediate following section entitled "Summary of the Invention."

In the paragraph starting on page 2, line 18 and ending on page 3, line 2.

In the paragraph starting on page 5, line 6 and ending at line 11.

In the paragraph starting on page 7, line 10 and ending at line 19.

In the paragraph starting on page 15, line 3 and ending at line 10.

In the paragraph starting on page 16, line 1 and ending on line 16.

In the paragraph starting on page 18, line 1 and ending at line 3.

In the paragraph starting on page 19, line 3 and ending at line 20.

The affected amended paragraphs are attached herein on separate sheets.

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Please substitute the enclosed corrected drawing sheet having Fig. 7 thereon for the same drawing sheet filed with the original application. Numeral 28b has been added

AMENDMENT TO SPECIFICATION

[Deleted material is struck-through and added material is underlined]

On page 1, after line 4 of the specification, add a title to the section that follows and amend the paragraph starting at line 5 and ending at line 18:

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Table monitoring systems are known in the art, but most require various staffers, and especially the host or Maitre-D, to either travel partially through the dining room to personally observe the status of the table. (Throughout this disclosure, "host" will be used generically to represent a "host," "hostess" or "Maitre-D.") In other cases, the host must communicate through head phones or a radio device with the floor staffers to verbally obtain information. This can be disruptive. A host is generally very busy trying to keep track of incoming clients, numbers ~~with~~ in within the party, which server got the last table and who is next to fairly distribute clients to servers, etc. Having to stop and try to talk to staffers can disrupt a chain of thought. However, a monitoring board or screen where real time status can be observed at a glance will allow a host to more efficiently seat clients. Table turn-over is increased and servers get to serve more clients over a shorter period. Additionally, it assists the bussing staff in their ability to easily identify tables needed to be cleaned and reset. Clients are impressed with the efficiency of the restaurant and return more frequently. So everybody does well, including the restaurant owners from the greater efficiency obtained with a real-time monitoring and control system.

In the paragraph starting on page 1, line 19 and ending on page 2, line 13 and add a title to the immediate following section entitled "Summary of the Invention" between line 13 and line 14:

As mentioned above, some monitoring and control systems known in the art are in a master and slave configuration. The main control functions are at the master station. Others require additional implements such as a magnetic wand to activate the magnetic switches in the circuit boards like that disclosed in U.S. Patent 5,032,834. If the magnetic wand is misplaced or lost, the host can not operate the board and disruption in the seating of clients may occur from the delay in trying to locate the wand. Further, if the wand is left on the board for a short time period, it can inadvertently make changes to the status of tables, including a portion of the board's tables or all ~~at~~ the tables on the board. Further, the wand is difficult for service staff and bussers to handle because it usually is attached to a string and hangs down the side of the surface supporting the board. Otherwise, the host needs to personally verify status changes of tables. Generally, when LEDs are used in conjunction with magnetic features, the LED lighting is typically low density, as is the case in the system commercialized and represented by the 5,032,834 patent. In addition, a key-pad is needed in order to enter status information, words are used to show status, there is no active legend to reinforce or train personnel and the device requires a multi-step process, not required by the present invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In the paragraph starting on page 2, line 18 and ending on page 3, line 2:

The system is cooperative in that it requires input by all personnel who work in or support the restaurant dining areas and, likewise, displays all resulting inputs on all monitors on the network. While it may be conducive to have job-specific personnel enter the table status as it ~~related~~ relates to their work, the system can be operated easily and intuitively by anyone who wants to update the table status.

In the paragraph starting on page 5, line 6 and ending at line 11:

An additional embodiment in the functionality of the present invention is the incorporation in the touch screen system of a "Reserve/Hold" program. This program allows the seating host to mark tables to be held for ~~guest~~ guests to be seated at a later time or allows a manager to close down one or more tables, for which, seating is not desired. There may be a group wanting a reserved section of the restaurant for a meeting or special event and the area needs to be closed-off for the meeting or event.

In the paragraph starting on page 7, line 10 and ending at line 19:

The present invention also preferably includes a dedicated portion of each board/screen that includes a legend indicating the light status for various conditions. For example, if the table were vacant and ready for seating, then the indicator light under the table indicia would be "off." Following the above examples, the legend would indicate that a table to be bussed has a "blinking" light under the table indicia. A table not bussed in a timely manner would have a rapidly blinking or "flashing" light under the table indicia. An occupied table would have a light "on" under the table indicia. This legend portion of each board is very useful for training new staff members and as a refresher guide for the staff to quickly recognize the symbolism of the light status for each table. That is, the legend reinforces the functions that each of the service staff person is performing, thereby also serving as a training tool for new staff personnel.

In the paragraph starting on page 15, line 3 and ending at line 10:

Electrical power in the form of DC power ~~34~~ (DC transformer adapter line connected to an AC source of power) should be sufficient to operate the system. Power may be supplied through one console 12 and the remaining consoles 12 could then be powered from this single source ~~34~~ with the necessary cabling between each console. Alternatively, each unit may be powered separately. As further described below, it is more efficient to have a single power source to provide the flexibility to connect one of the consoles to the nearest AC outlet. A 12 VDC power supply rated at 2 amps DC and 0.5 amps for each monitor on the network over three monitors is sufficient to power the invention 10.

In the paragraph starting on page 16, line 1 and ending on line 16:

On the other hand, the light status indicia portion 36b may include "OFF" for each vacant table, "blinking" for each table ready for bussing, "flashing" for each table not bussed within a desired time period and "ON" for each table occupied. "Flashing" as defined herein is merely a change in the rate of off and on (blinking) such that it is increased at a rate that one may consider the light to be "flashing." In other words, for exaggerated purposes only to show an example, a light that goes from "ON" to "OFF" and back to "ON" in 2 second increments may be considered "blinking" but if the rate changes to a full cycle "ON" to "OFF" to "ON" in less than a 1/2 of a second, then this may be considered "flashing." Of course, other equivalent status indicators are contemplated by the invention in terms of how the LED bulbs 28a operate or how the highlighting feature of the integrated touch screen/image display is programmed. For example, instead of blinking lights, other additional colored lights or illuminated highlights may be used. The specific examples of how one communicates status in terms of the lighting is therefore not limited herein to no light, illuminated light, blinking light, flashing light, or even two colors for the lighting or illumination feature. A third color may instead be used for the bussing needs or a fourth light or illuminated highlighted color may be used for the need to urgently bus a table. What is important is the attaining of a readily observable real time communication between the staff.

In the paragraph starting on page 18, line 1 and ending at line 3:

For a small restaurant having a host station and a relative small floor plan where a wait station is close to the kitchen, a system 10 that has ~~at~~ two or three monitoring consoles 12 should be sufficient. Of course, larger restaurant will need more units if greater efficiency is desired.

In the paragraph starting on page 19, line 3 and ending at line 20:

Generally, the present invention has a system configuration ~~of~~ that has no less than two (2) monitors and it is anticipated that no more than five (5) monitors on a single network. For larger restaurants, more may be required but for most restaurants, 2 to 5 monitors should suffice. A communications network is incorporated. In most cases, a 3 or 4-wire communication cable and a 2-wire DC supply line ~~34~~ is all that is required. Power can be connected to all stations from a single power supply feeding one of the monitors, or separate power may be provided to individual monitors. It is anticipated that one way to power the monitors and its network is a 12VDC power supply ~~34~~ rated at about 2 amps DC plus an additional 0.5 amps for each monitor over three monitors on a network. Typical wire cable for the DC supply line is a 2-conductor, 18 AWG stranded copper wire. The DC transformer can be incorporated in the power line, which plugs into a 110 VAC outlet, or the transformer can be built into the circuitry of each monitor when powered separately or built into the first monitor fed by the power supply when power to remaining monitors is supplied from the first monitor. To provide maximum versatility in substituting monitors when needed, it may be better to have a power supply line that incorporates the transformer in the supply line itself. Fig. 4 shows examples of ports. One set of ports is shown as 34a, one port for direct connection of a power line and the second for connecting the power in series with networked consoles 12. Another set of ports is shown as 42a for the network cabling connections between consoles 12.